



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

June 26, 1990, 2:30 pm

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YEUTTER AND LUJAN ANNOUNCE FIVE-POINT PLAN TO PRESERVE OWL AND PROTECT JOBS

WASHINGTON, June 26--Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter and Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced a five-point package of measures in response to the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. The measures spell out the response of federal land management agencies to the Fish and Wildlife Service listing on June 22. They are designed to achieve a balance between preservation of the owl and the protection of jobs and economic opportunity in the Pacific Northwest.

"The administration is deeply concerned both about endangered species and the livelihood of families in the Pacific Northwest who depend on timber production," said Yeutter. "We take the Endangered Species Act seriously and will implement the law faithfully," he added. "Today we have set into motion a process to balance our responsibility in preserving the owl and forests while protecting the economic lives of American men and women who live and work in the region."

The five points announced today are as follows:

First, Lujan announced that the Bureau of Land Management will implement a strategy which fully complies with ESA and which can preserve a greater number of owls but involves less economic dislocation than that developed by the Interagency Scientific Committee (ISC), also known as the Thomas Committee. Under the new BLM approach, an additional 125 pairs of owls will be protected beyond the recommendations of the ISC report. BLM estimates show that its plan would result in the loss of 1,000 jobs due to reduced timber harvests on BLM lands in Oregon and northern California. The federal government had previously estimated that 7,600 jobs would be lost from implementation of the ISC conservation plan on BLM lands in the region.

Second, in fiscal year 1990 both the Forest Service and BLM timber sales will follow the provisions of Section 318 of the fiscal year 1990 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. These sales will be made in full compliance with the ESA and have been prepared in a manner not inconsistent with the ISC report. Yeutter pointed out that the listing which takes effect July 23 will not have an immediate impact on timber harvests on FS lands.

(more)

Yeutter and Lujan pledged that the FS, BLM and FWS would expedite timber sales pursuant to the ESA process. This action will assist FS and BLM to minimize delay of timber sales and be consistent in achieving the Congressionally mandated level of timber for this fiscal year.

Third, the administration will convene a high level interagency task force, chaired by the secretary of agriculture, to begin work immediately on devising a forest management plan for the FS for fiscal year 1991. The task force will work in close consultation with key members of Congress from the committees with jurisdiction over forestry and endangered species issues and from the affected states, as well as the governors of those states.

Over the longer term, Yeutter pointed out that implementation of the conservation strategy recommended in the ISC report for FS lands would have entailed significant job loss. The federal government currently estimates that the reduced timber harvests on FS lands would result in the loss of 20,000 jobs by the year 2000, unless we develop a conservation strategy that takes economic and social considerations into account as well as biological ones.

"The president has charged us with finding a balance between protection of owl habitat and concern for jobs," Yeutter said. The task force report will be submitted to the president no later than Sept. 1.

Fourth, the administration will seek to convene the Endangered Species Committee, under existing law, should a Federal agency receive a "jeopardy" opinion from the FWS on a proposed timber sale or harvest plan. The Endangered Species Committee is steered by the secretary of the interior and consists of the secretaries of agriculture and the army, the administrators for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, the chairman of the Council of Economic advisors, and one person appointed by the president from each affected state.

The administration will soon be submitting legislation to the Congress to broaden the mandate of the Endangered Species Committee to allow it to develop a more balanced long-term forest management plan for the region.

As a result of today's decisions, the administration will be seeking passage of several pieces of legislation in the coming months. Specifically, the administration will ask the Congress to pass legislation which will:

- o Adopt the BLM forest management strategy so as to allow its implementation to proceed without disruption by court challenge;
- o Adopt the interim management plan developed by the interagency task force for FS lands and allow its implementation without court challenge; and
- o Expand the mandate of the Endangered Species Committee to allow it to develop a long-term forest management plan for Federal lands.

Fifth, the administration announced support for the provisions of the Customs and Trade Act of 1990 which would ban the export of raw logs taken from state lands. Enactment of these provisions, contained in amendments to the Act now pending before a House-Senate Conference Committee, will reduce job loss in the Pacific Northwest by about 6,000 jobs by the year 2000, according to Forest Service estimates.